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ST. AUGUSTINE AND ROMANS 7:7-25:
AN ANALYSIS OF USE AND INFLUENCES

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by
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PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to study and analyze St. Augustine's use of scripture and how he came by his understanding of it. The stimulus behind the asking of these questions is the current hermeneutical debate. I had heard Professor Krister Stendahl of the Harvard Divinity School in a lecture on Biblical Theology* make the observation that when theologians such as Origen, Augustine, and Luther did Biblical exegesis they were doing theology, and vice-versa. To this he cryptically added that there was much that could be said for the approach. I carried Professor Stendahl's remark to recent works on hermeneutics with their varied descriptions of the problem and the discussion of viable methodologies or the lack of their being any to be had. It occurred to me that considerable clarity and insight could be gained by studying how the major theologians of the church operated hermeneutically. To be sure, an Origen or an Augustine did not speak of or were aware of a "hermeneutical problem" in any precise sense of today's meaning of the word. Nevertheless, they did hermeneutics in the sense that they were concerned to understand scripture and bring it to bear

*Lecture of October 6, 1965.

upon their own times.

I would have liked to have analyzed Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, Barth, and Tillich with this in mind. Such a study would have been, however, far beyond the scope of a Bachelor of Divinity thesis. I thought, then, to follow what happened to a significant passage of Scripture in Augustine, Luther, and Barth. Because of the importance of Romans in each of the three, I decided to select a passage from there. I chose Romans 7:7-25 since English translations are available of Augustine's exegesis of it, as well as Luther's and Barth's. But once I was launched into the material, I found the scope still too vast for thesis purposes and so contented myself with Augustine's understanding and use of the passage. Such a limitation in scope freed me to make the study in some depth. Unfortunately the limitation in scope also limited the reach of the conclusions. I assume that what is true of Augustine's use of Romans 7:7-25 will be generally true of his use of scripture elsewhere, but this is an assumption which requires a demonstration lying outside the limits of the thesis. Also, in regard to the hermeneutical debate of today, the focus of this thesis does not lend itself to a definitive statement and explanation of the implications of the work of

early theologians upon hermeneutics today. I will, however, venture in an epilogue to offer some tentative observations which hopefully point to the insight and guidance which can be gained for hermeneutics by additional studies along the lines of this thesis.

In attempting to come to grips with the subject matter of the thesis, I quickly discovered a major obstacle. There is simply a dearth of secondary material in English which deals with the thesis's particular concern with Augustine. Any serious student of Patristics must of necessity have a good reading knowledge of Greek, Latin, French, and German. Would that I had such linguistic ability! Accepting my own limitations, I have dealt almost entirely with the primary sources making use of what little secondary material I could locate.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
I. ROMANS 7:7-25	1
II. ST. AUGUSTINE AND ROMANS 7:7-25	12
Exegesis in Romans 7:7-25 in <u>Letter to Simplician</u>	13
Augustine's Use of Romans 7:7-25....	19
III. ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS	41
Latin Heritage	44
Neo-Platonism	51
Confessions	53
IV. AUGUSTINE IN RELATION TO ROMANS 7:7-25..	65
EPILOGUE	74
GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY	76
SPECIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ROMANS 7	78

CHAPTER ONE
ROMANS 7:7-25

Even the most casual perusal of the exegetical studies and theological expositions of Romans reveals that there is no generally agreed upon understanding of the chapter. The lines of interpretation have tended to emphasize the temporal question: to what period of his life is the apostle referring? Origen and most of the Greek Fathers believed that the passage referred to life under the law. Such contemporary scholars as J.S. Stewart and C.H. Dodd have followed this line of interpretation. It is also true of the earlier Augustine. The later Augustine and the Latin Fathers interpreted the passage as reflecting the apostle's post-conversion experience. This line has been followed by such contemporary scholars as John Murray and Anders Nygren. A third and new line of interpretation has more recently arisen among scholars such as Lietzmann, Kummel, G. Bornkamm, Dibelius and C.L. Mitton, also E. Brunner and Karl Barth. These scholars have tended to move away from a psychological and biographical interpretation to that of viewing the passage as depicting mankind in general.¹

¹Richard N. Longenecker, Paul: Apostle of Liberty (Harper & Row: New York, 1964), pp. 86, 87.

The purpose of this chapter is to present something of what it was in fact that Augustine was dealing with when he read, wrote upon, and made use of Romans 7. Romans 7, while variably understood, served as a base line in Augustine's thinking. The influence of Scripture per se upon Augustine can no more be ruled out than can his knowledge of the Greek writers, his Latin heritage, and his own immediate milieu. This chapter will not be the last word exegetically, but will be a presentation of what I believe to be the soundest understanding exegetically and theologically that has been given to date.²

Pauline scholarship in general underwent a fairly total re-evaluation in J. Munck's work Paul and the Salvation of Mankind. In this highly provocative work, though fraught with questionable theses, he asserts that traditional interpretations had brought to the foreground Paul's explication of Christian experience as radically contrasted to Jewish Christianity's insistence upon maintenance of Jewish law. Munck insists that this is an overstatement and that Paul's real concern is the relationship of the Old Covenant with the Jews and the universal New Covenant. Thus, for Munck, Romans 9-11 is

² For the most useful studies on Romans the reader is referred to the Bibliography; "Studies on Romans 7:7-25."

the climax of Paul's major epistle and not an addendum attached to Romans 8.³ This same basic viewpoint was more concisely set forth by Krister Stendahl in his article, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West."⁴ The implication of this re-evaluation, specifically on the understanding of Romans 7, is that it places the burden of proof upon those who perceive the material as being primarily autobiographical.

The arguments for the biographical interpretation of Romans 7, particularly vss. 14-24, and as divided into the "pre-conversion" and "post-conversion" camps have been well summarized by C.L. Mitton.⁵ The base line of this interpretation is that the recurring first person pronoun is not a literary device, but refers to a genuine spiritual autobiography, an autobiography affirmed by subsequent Christian experience. The main argument for the pre-conversion view is the contrast between Romans 7 and 8 as set off by the "now" of Romans 8:1. On the

³ Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind (SCM Press: London, 1959), pp. 42-49.

⁴ Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in the Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 56, 1953, pp. 199-215.

⁵ C.L. Mitton, "Romans VII--Reconsidered--I, II, and III," Expository Times, Vol. 65, #3, 4, and 5, Dec. '53, Jan. '54, Feb. '54, pp. 78-81, 99-103, 132-135, (See also Longenecker, Paul, p. 110).

post-conversion side, the main points used in support of the case are the use of the present tense starting with verse 14, the fact that Romans 7 is set in the context of Romans 5, 6 and 8 which do describe the Christian life, that there is no indication of inner turmoil in Paul's description of himself as a Pharisee in Phil. 3:6, and that inner tension in the Christian is not inconsistent with such passages as Romans 8:23. The biggest problem to the pre-conversion school has always been verse 25:

Thanks be to God through Jesus
Christ our Lord! So then, I of
myself serve the law of God with
my mind, but with my flesh I serve
the law of sin.

As the passage stands, it confirms the post-conversion position because it places deliverance through Christ and the struggle between mind and flesh along side of each other, one not, as it were, ruling out the other. Because of the embarrassment this causes the pre-conversion interpreters, Moffatt and Dodd move vs. 25b to after vs. 23, even ~~though~~ there is no manuscript evidence for this.⁶

When one moves from the above traditional lines of the contemporary exegetical debate over Romans 7 to Augustine's exegesis of the passage, as will be done in

⁶Ibid., p. 79.

Chapter Two of this paper, one is struck by the extent to which Augustine laid the ground work for both schools. In his earlier exegesis found in his Letter to Simplician, Augustine argued the pre-conversion position. In a late work, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, Augustine argued the post-conversion position. His primary argument is based on Romans 7:22-23 where he states that the man who delights in the law of God must, by definition, be a man under Grace and that therefore Paul is speaking of his post-conversion life.⁷ It is interesting to note that in a recent commentary, John Murray decides in favor of the post-conversion position on the basis of exactly the same line of reasoning.⁸ Although the traditional lines of interpretation, still very much in vogue, are not generally so dramatically dependent upon Augustine as in the case of Murray, there is the undeniable impression that much of what has been done has been a commentary upon Augustine's treatment rather than a direct engagement with the epistle itself.

As has already been indicated, scholars such as Kummel, Stendahl, Munck, Mitton and Longenecker have

⁷ Augustine, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, I:22.

⁸ John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, Vol. I (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959), pp. 257-273.

made such a direct engagement. It would appear also that the more strictly theological approach of Barth and Brunner have engaged Paul, not Paul via Augustine. In order to have what I believe to be the more exegetically satisfactory presentation of what Romans 7:7-25 was really intended to convey, the expositions of Barth and Tillich will be summarized, and then the suggestions of Stendahl, Mitton and Longenecker will be presented. It would be wrong to assume that there is complete agreement among these scholars, but there is common in all of them a movement beyond viewing Romans 7:7-25 as being primarily a spiritual autobiography.

Karl Barth, in A Shorter Commentary on Romans,⁹ never attempts to describe Romans 7 as descriptive in any way of Paul, himself. The point of his exposition is that ch. 7 is an elucidation of the fact that the Gospel liberates man from the law of sin and death. The main points of the argument, he says, are found in Romans 7:1-6 and 7:24-25. The sections 7:7-12 and 7:13-23 are elaborations of the state from which the Christian has been called. He states quite bluntly that the point of the chapter is not a psychology of sin to be

⁹ Karl Barth, A Shorter Commentary on Romans (John Knox Press: Richmond, Va., 1954), pp. 74-87.

found in vss. 13-23. "The sections 7:7-12 and 13-23 serve rather to elucidate the assumption ... that the law incites us to sin and on the other hand accuses us of sin and condemns us to death." In dealing specifically with vss. 13-23, Barth states that these verses describe the "queer saint" who is led astray by sin and endeavors to put his hands on God's Grace. The dominant pronoun "I" refers not to Paul, but to the "I" who shall never be able to be rid of sin. He concludes: "There is no line which starts with 'I' and finishes somewhere with salvation and liberty."

Emil Brunner's study, The Letter to the Romans,¹⁰ argues a viewpoint similar to Barth's. The "I" is not Paul himself, but is rather a device Paul uses to show how matters stand with man and humanity in general. The passage, he states, therefore should be understood theologically and not psychologically. Brunner sees the passage as descriptive of primordial man as opposed to Barth who sees it descriptive of only those who seek to grasp God's Grace with their own hands. With the change of tense from the aorist to the present in vs. 14, Brunner states that Paul does this for the sake of

¹⁰ Emil Brunner, The Letter to the Romans (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 55-65.

vividness, that Paul is still speaking of the Godless man before the law. He qualifies this, however, by pointing out that the flesh is something which binds the new man, in part, to the old. Therefore, vss. 14-23 apply to the Christian insofar as he is not in Christ but in sin. He places this in contrast to the man who is in Christ, the man freed from bondage to the law of sin and death, and who is vividly described by Paul in Romans 8.

Both Brunner and Barth have sought to deal with what Paul's message was trying to convey, rather than what the message might be conveying about Paul. In denying that Paul is presenting a "psychology of sin," they fail to deal adequately with the extensive anthropological language of the passage. They account for its presence, but do not deal with what Paul in fact is trying to state by using the language in the way he does. Stendahl, in his article, however, does this. The passage reads as a diatribe, which Stendahl takes as his key for interpreting it. First, in vss. 7-12 he works out the answer to the question, "Is the Law sin?" Then he deals with the question, "Is the Law what brought death?" The answer is given in vs. 25b. In vss. 13-25 Paul defends the Law, says Stendahl, by distinguishing it from "Sin and the Flesh." Rather it is the case that sin is what is condemned and the "I" is acquitted. On this basis,

Stendahl is able to conclude that the anthropological language is used to blame the flesh and to recognize that the Law is good.¹¹ Stendahl presented this line of interpretation in order to show how much more depth of understanding can be achieved of Pauline material when one does not view Paul as an introspective Latin as did Augustine.

C.L. Mitton's series of three articles in the Expository Times, "Romans--Reconsidered"¹² is basically a refutation of Nygren's carefully elaborated post-conversion interpretation. Mitton, originally a pre-conversion man, was compelled to move beyond both points of view in order to have an answer for Nygren. His point of departure is the "autos ego" of vs. 25b which he states is far more emphatic than the "I, myself" the English suggests. The emphasis, he says, suggests speaking entirely on one's own without the inward reinforcement and cleansing suggested by true conversion. On this basis, then, vss. 14-25 describe the experience of any man who attempts to live up to the demands of God on his own, especially the Jew or nominal Christian for whom Christ is an embodiment of

¹¹ Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul," p. 212.

¹² Mitton, op. cit.

the highest moral standards. Therefore, the experience is both past and present; vs. 25a is the conclusion of the section and vs. 25b the summarization.¹³ The major failure of Mitton's analysis is in not relating the section to what preceded it. He does, however, maintain the contrast of the man who is not in Christ of chapter 7 to the man who is in Christ in chapter 8.

Richard N. Longenecker has brought together a laudatory breadth of old and new insights to his discussion of Romans 7 in his study of Paul. He has picked up on two significant points. There is a close parallel in the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Manual of Discipline to Romans 7 where the "I" is used in a clearly gnomic fashion descriptive of human existence.¹⁴ He also points to other instances of gnomic use of the singular person in Paul, such as in I Cor. 13:1-3. The other point is more of an observation, but a provocative one: Mitton shows how Paul in vss. 7-13 has drawn on and paralleled the Genesis account of the Fall. By this, says Longenecker, Paul presents "...a personal identification with the Genesis account of the Fall."¹⁵ From this Longenecker

¹³Ibid., pp. 132, 133, & 135.

¹⁴Longenecker, Paul, pp. 88, 89.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 92.

concludes: "By the concept of identification and the realization of corporate community, it is humanity in Adam--and thus true of Paul as well."¹⁶

By using the above two insights plus the work of C.L. Mitton discussed above, Longenecker breaks Romans 7:7-25 into four basic elements: (1) historically, "I am in Adam" vss. 7-13, (2) existentially, "Adam is in me," vss. 14-24, (3) anticipatory interjection of God's ability, vs. 25a, and (4) summary and conclusion of the matter, "I of myself" am unable before God.¹⁷

The possibility of a far more adequate understanding of Romans 7 as compared with the confining autobiographical interpretation is manifest in the work of the scholars discussed. There is not, however, a single and precise interpretation which flows out of their work. It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt a more precise exegesis of Romans 7 than has been done to date. The work done to date which has been presented in this paper will serve as one of the baselines for attempting to analyze Augustine's use of Romans 7 and its influence upon him. It is necessary, then, to move on to Augustine's understanding and use of the passage, and then to the influence of Greek and Latin thought upon that understanding and usage.

¹⁶Ibid., p.93. ¹⁷Ibid., p.114.

CHAPTER TWO

ST. AUGUSTINE AND ROMANS 7:7-25

St. Augustine wrote his Letter to Simplician: On Various Questions soon after his election to the episcopate in 397 (cf. Retractions, II, i). The first question he responded to was Simplician's request to interpret Romans 7:7-25. Augustine's exegesis has no initially stated polemical concern as is the case when he comes to deal with Romans 7 in his Anti-Pelagian writing: Against Two Letters of the Pelagians to Pope Boniface in 420. The exegesis in the Letter is a carefully considered performance on Augustine's part. This is evident in the fact that he had done a commentary on Galatians in 394 and had conducted sessions on Romans at Carthage from which certain comments were set forth in his Exposition of Certain Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, also in 394. The treatment of Romans 7 in Simplician follows the same basic lines of interpretation, but in a fuller and more elaborate treatment.¹

The following examination of Augustine's exegesis is not set forth in order to determine the soundness of his understanding of Paul. For the time being, such

¹John S. Burleigh, "Augustine's Earlier Writings," Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 6 (Westminster Press: Philadelphia), p.373.

judgment will be suspended in order to focus on what the questions were that Augustine asked of the passage. The questions are not explicitly stated, but what emerges most clearly are anthropological questions: What is man's condition before Grace and under Law? To what extent is man changed by grace and to what extent is man's own will a determinate factor?

It is the contention of this chapter that throughout all of Augustine's writings he does not essentially deviate from approaching the passage from the point of view of the above questions and terms. Because of this, his usage cannot be thought of as capricious isegesis. There is to be sure the major shift in emphasis from man's total dependence upon grace in the late anti-Pelagian writings, as opposed to a fair degree of effective power being allotted to the will in the earlier anti-Manichaen writings. Upon examination, however, the close connection between the two stances remains and the dependence of what followed on what preceded is evident.

Exegesis of Romans 7:7-25 in Letter to Simplician:

The main point of the passage for St. Augustine which emerges is a defense of the Old Testament Law against its detractors, the Manichees. In defending

the law, two concepts of St. Augustine come into full bloom: grace and will. It is necessary to see, then, how St. Augustine defends the law by use of these concepts of grace and will. At the same time St. Augustine determines the character of Paul as he wrote Romans 7:7-25: "In this passage the apostle seems to me to represent himself as a man set under the law, and to speak in that character."² This view is one which Augustine changes in his Anti-Pelagian writings. It is a view closely related in Augustine to his view of grace and will in relation to the Law. This relationship, because it became an issue in his later writings, must be observed in his earlier exegesis. St. Augustine takes as the major question of the passage its opening words:

What then shall we say? That the
law is sin? By no means! Yet if
it had not been for the law, I
should not have known sin.

From this comes his interpretation of Paul's understanding of the law, that there is no direct causal relation between sin and law. Thus in Romans 7:8b, Augustine points out that sin is not literally "dead without the law," rather it is "latent" or "thought to be dead (1:4)."

² Augustine, Letter to Simplician, 1:1.

What the law does, he tells us, is to make sin fully sinful. That the law does this is part of God's good purpose. We read in 1:2 of Simplician:

Sin cannot be overcome without the grace of God, so the law was given to convert the soul by anxiety about its guilt, so that it might be ready to receive grace.

The thrust of Augustine's interpretation is captured in the above quote; to him the rest of Romans 7 is an elaboration of this one point. Insofar as this holds true, Augustine's view is an introspective one despite whatever historical perspective he elsewhere saw as extant in the Old Testament law which can be seen in his statement on "development" in Confessions 3:7 and in True Religion Ch. 17. Here, however, Augustine's view is introspective. Sin is sin, but under the law it is "...abundantly and perniciously sinful, because it is done knowingly and in transgression of the commandment." This is Augustine's version of Romans 7:9. The use of the first person in the text suggests to Augustine that Paul was "not speaking in his own person, but in the person of the old man."

The meaning of Romans 7 is further elaborated when Augustine comes to verse fourteen:

We know that the law is spiritual;
but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For Augustine the law cannot be fulfilled except by spiritual persons, a state which requires grace. "Carnal," Augustine explains, means to be sold under sin, to be in the control of the passions completely. People who are under grace are carnal in some degree, but are not servants of lust (Simplician 1:7). This statement provides the basis for interpreting verses 16-20 beginning with "I do what I do not want..." to "it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within one." This, for Augustine, is the man "sold under sin," not yet freed by grace. Through the law, however, he knows what he is doing is wrong. Augustine here is carried forward by the logical implications of his preceding discussion of "carnal." He is concerned to mention and then argue away the "now" of verse 17. He does so on the force of his above logic which shows Paul to be speaking of a pre-conversion state. (In Book I, chs. 18-21 of his Treatise to Pope Boniface, this same "now" in his translation is pivotal to his argument showing that Paul is speaking of man under grace and who is, therefore, still carnal!) The point here for Augustine is clear; without grace, man is unable to overcome the reign of sin, a point which Augustine amplified in City of God, Bk. 13:13.

The second point of amplification comes in the short eleventh paragraph. For Augustine, Paul has the truth of man's condition before God. Augustine's job is only to make its meaning clear. To this point his explication is incomplete. Man is carnal; the law makes this clear. Paul has been speaking of man before the coming of Grace because Grace frees man from bondage to the carnal. But why grace is necessary has not been brought out. Fortunately Paul does this in verse eighteen. Man's problem is that of will.

To will is present with me, but
to do that which is good I find
not.

Has the ability to will, necessary for man's responsibility for the fall, been taken away? Clearly not. "To will is present with me." Paul, for Augustine, is still speaking of pre-conversion man. So actual willing was, always has been, and is within the power of man. The problem is that the will has lost its power to do the good. This, explains Augustine, is the penal condition of man resulting from original sin. This state of affairs quite logically explains the famous verse 19 of Romans seven. He will to do what he should, but because of the strength of sin over the will, he is unable to do what he should. Paul states this even more explicitly in verse 22:

I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.

The law which he delights in is the Old Testament law, law which men cannot do apart from the grace of God. Verse 24, the "...wretched man that I am.", sums up man's predicament. Verse 25a a, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.", is the exultant statement of God's grace being offered to man through Christ. The passage, for Augustine, ends here. It is significant that, in his later treatment, he carries the passage on through verse 25b and concludes with 8:1. This time he keeps the Pandora's box of 25b closed. He has now completed his exegesis. Paul's message is clear to Augustine:

- 1) The Old Testament is good and has its purpose in the scheme of man's salvation.
- 2) Man cannot presume on his own strength but must rely on the grace of God.
- 3) Man's will has only two alternatives: turning to God for the power to fulfill righteousness, or to reject grace and remain in bondage to sin.

Augustine, in the final three paragraphs of the passage (paragraphs 15-17) does two things: He resolves Pauline passages which were cited by the Manichees in demonstrating that the law was evil. He answers the

question of how, through Christ, the law is fulfilled. His answer is succinct. The law is fulfilled by charity and ~~that~~ the Pauline expression "dead to the law," means dead to the condemnation of the law. The obligation of the law remains; through grace it is to be fulfilled in charity.

Augustine's Use of Romans 7:7-25:

In light of the fact that Augustine wrote over one hundred works of all shapes and varieties, not to mention numerous letters and sermons, not all pertinent references have been evaluated. A selection has been necessary. I have selected a major work from each of the major periods of Augustine's life: On Free Will, On Baptism against the Donatists, and On Grace and Free Will. In addition, because of the scope of the work and the years it took to be written, City of God will be used.³ No consideration of Paul and Augustine is complete in any way without the Confessions. (One is never sure whether Paul or Confessions is to be used as a commentary on the

³Following the dating of Eugene Portalie, A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine (Henry Regenery Company: Chicago, 1960). Free Will (388-395); Letter to Simplician (396-397); Confessions (397-401); Treatise on Baptism (400); City of God (413-426); Treatise Against Pelagians (420); Grace and Free Will (426-427).

other.) Confessions, because of the enmeshment of Paul and Augustine in Augustine's hindsight, will be considered specifically in the third chapter.

Augustine's Free Will was started in 388 and finished by 395. It was initiated according to Retractions I:9 from a "rational inquiry" to determine the case of evil. The answer which is expounded in the work is "free will." The underlying adversaries are Augustine's former friends, the Manichees, who posited a co-eternal evil God in order to explain evil. The work is undertaken in dialogue form, a form which all but disappears from the third book.⁴ Because of the work being set up as a philosophical dialogue, there are few references to Scripture. The one quotation from Romans 7, verses 18 and 19, is found in Bk. III.

In Book One there is a free-wheeling, rational argument showing that evil exists in the will's turning away from things eternal to the mutable (I:35). Since all men desire the happy life, the cause is not in the

⁴The difference is in style and somewhat in the places of emphasis between Books I-II and Book III. Book III of Free Will was written possibly five years after Books I-II. These years must have been fluid ones for Augustine. In earlier portions he is optimistic about the potential of the human will whereas he is much less so in Book III. It is interesting to note that Pelagius quotes from the earlier portions in his own defense while Augustine refutes Free Will being a Pelagian work by referring to the later portions of the work (cf. Burnaby, Augustine, p.107).

lower objects, but in not willing to act arightly, not seeking the divine (I:30). The problem is not in the affections, nor in the objects of the affections, but in their turning to the lower in preference to the higher.⁵ The result of turning away from God is the just punishment of the mind being enslaved by the passions (I:22). Romans 7:22 is surely describing this result, this "just punishment" in Augustine's mind. Book two argues extensively that all things good are of God, that in the human order, the will is the middle-good between the reason and the body. So when the middle turns to the lower in order to be master, it loses its source of goodness. Because it does this of its own volition, it cannot of itself restore itself. Grace is necessary.

In these first two books essentials of Augustine's thought have been set forth: Fall is in the will; enslavement to the passions is just punishment; the will can resist the temptations of passions clinging to the good, but once having fallen, the will cannot "train" itself up. The ending, of Book II,

Therefore let us believe firmly
that God's right hand, Our Lord
Jesus Christ, is extended from
on high (II:54).

⁵ John Burnaby, Amor Dei (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1939), pp.222-224.

is reminiscent of Romans 7:25a.

The style of Book Three is considerably different from the first two books. There is transition from the dialogue form to that of the treatise which is almost complete. There is an intensification in Augustine's struggle with the material, with God's foreknowledge and man's will, and the problem of evil in light of the suffering of children. Overriding all the difficulties, however, is a calm assurance that God is good and just. Thus to speak of man's condition in a fallen state, is to speak of his penal condition, a condition not just reflected in evil wills, but also in man's ignorance and inability to act arightly. To support this point he quotes Romans 7:18 and 19. The conflict of the flesh and the spirit indicates that the true order in man is disturbed and that Grace is necessary to restore man from his penal state with its two conditions of ignorance and difficulty (III:51-52). Augustine is optimistic, within his limitations, of the human potential. The soul by its will can advance by means of piety and studies, having been given the initial power and extra grace along the way (III:64).

Augustine in his work Free Choice was dealing with the same basic problem he was in his Letter to Simplician, that of the Manichees. His approach in the

earlier writing is freer in style, a generally brighter picture of the human condition, but still saying the same basic thing in the two works. God is the one creator who created all things. Any answer is determined by the fact that God is good, that he is just. Therefore, even the sufferings of children must be either just (Augustine's later emphasis), or adjunctive to God's good purpose. The over-arching question Augustine was asking then, was, How are evil and suffering to be understood given an omnibeneficent creator?

Augustine's Treatise On Baptism is a long treatise dealing with the Donatist versus Catholic position on Baptism. In effect it is an essay describing the relationship of grace to the Catholic Church, especially as seen in the context of the sacramental life of the church. It is not surprising that, insofar as the treatise does not deal with law and will, there are no direct quotations from Romans? Overall there are few Pauline passages used, as compared with the later anti-Pelagian writings. The main thesis of the treatise, however, does illustrate an application of Augustine's understanding of evil and the fall. Non-Catholic baptisms, assuming that water and the name of the Trinity are used, are valid, but not effective. But because,

as in the case he was dealing with, the Donatists, there was contention with the Catholics. Therefore, they lacked charity and so were carnal, i.e., they were turned to the lower instead of the higher (Bk. I; ch.10). There is an even stronger statement of this in Book III, ch. 16 where Augustine states that sacraments are incomplete apart from the church, since apart from the church the Holy Spirit is not operative. The grace to be had in any sacrament, apart from the one church is incomplete. Augustine, then, is coming out even stronger than in the treatise, Free Will, for the necessity of grace. Even further, he continuously points out that the grace in baptism remits only previous sins. This is true with Catholic baptism. Therefore, a man is responsible for ensuing sins; a baptized member of the church can stand in need of correction (Book I:12). In this kind of statement the suggestion is that man has continued warfare with his members and that he stands in continual need of Grace. The emphasis is on what Grace can effect, not on what is open to the will. It is for the will, however, to seek unity by becoming a member of the Catholic Church.

Underneath the debate with the Donatists, there is a growing concern with the extent of the dependence

of the will on God's grace in light of the fact that the Christian's life in this world is clothed with mortality. There is nothing in the treatise inconsistent with what came out of his exegesis of Romans 7, but there are these suggestions of the greater dependence of the will upon Grace after baptism, after conversion. In the treatise on Free Will the suggestion is that by and large through perserverance, once the will is redirected to its creator, it will travel through this life clinging to the truth. The Treatise on Baptism hasn't refuted perserverance as a prime requisite, but has given greater emphasis to the need for continued grace.

The City of God, Augustine's magnus opus, was written over a thirteen year period. The manifold purpose and concerns which appear throughout the book defy systematic analysis. Initially the work is an apologetic dealing with pagan invective against Christianity following the 410 sack of Rome. Alongside of this, there is an attempt to refute the views of those Christians who believed that the Church and the empire were co-terminus in this world as in the writings of Eusebius. Then, in the latter sections of the book, there are reflections of the Pelagian controversy. Because of the range of City of God, it is a

fair reflection of Augustine's use of Scripture and the consistency or inconsistency in his thinking as he finds it guided by Scripture.

In actual fact, there are only two direct quotations from Romans 7:7-25 to be found in the whole book. There are, however, innumerable paraphrasings which are to be found largely in the last four books. The first instance of a direct quote is in Book 13:5 where Romans 7:12, 13 is quoted. It is followed by the statement:

Exceeding, he says, because the transgression is more heinous when through the increasing lust of sin the law, itself is also despised.

This statement is of the same import as his comment in Simplician, that sin under the law is " ...abundantly and perniciously sinful." The overall statement of Book 15:5, is that law makes sin stronger, but there is not the suggestion that it creates anxiety and desire for righteousness; rather he states that without grace there cannot be any desire for righteousness. The argument is repeated in Bk. 21:15.

The second occurrence of a direct quote comes in Book 15:7 where Augustine describes Cain's crime as superbia. He quotes Romans 7:17 to explain that the passions, the carnal part, should be ruled by the mind. This follows his exegesis in Simplician 1:7 almost verbatim.

Those categories which are the same topically as those in Romans 7, "will", "evil", and "grace", are more numerous than can be adequately handled without a computer. For compactness' sake those references which deal directly and self-consciously with these topics have been gathered. Augustine closely analyzes Law, as Old Testament law, not natural law as differentiated from eternal law. Books 15:5 and 21:15 have been described already.

Significantly, the way in which Augustine speaks of will and grace varies from section to section of the work. There are two positive statements on will in Books one and five. Both stand in polemical relationship to their immediate context. In Books twelve through fourteen there are statements describing the fall of the will, its superbia, evil thereby is a deficient result. Books 19-22 never speak of will apart from grace and restoration. There is also a significant description of sin and restoration following Book 15:6. The fact that will and evil come together in Books 12-14, and will and restoration in Books 19-22 is to be primarily attributed to the structure of the City of God. This fact must be remembered when the passages are analyzed.

In Book I:18, Augustine asserts that the soul cannot be polluted by the lust of another without the consent of the will. "For if purity can thus be destroyed, then assuredly purity is no virtue of the soul." Augustine is dealing with the question of the status of Christian virgins raped in the 410 invasion. Some had felt driven to the extreme of suicide. Augustine is thus speaking of converted Christians, those under grace. His statement, here, with this understood, does not unduly exalt the will. It most consistently argues that man's real difficulty lies in the will, not in the body qua body.

In Book 5:9-10, Augustine has an elaborate argument for maintaining God's foreknowledge and free will. He states that human willing is included in the order of causes which is "embraced" or "resolved" in God. In 5:10 he states:

Our wills, therefore, exist as
wills, and do themselves whether
we do by willing, and which would
not be done if we were unwilling.

Out of context the statement is Pelagian. It is part of an elaborate argument, however, on will, not fallen will. Augustine is attempting to walk a philosophical tight rope between Cicero's complete free will with no "ananke" and the complete "ananke" with no free will of the Stoics. His difficulty is caught up in his highly

unphilosophical statement, towards the end of the passage:

We faithfully and sincerely confess both (foreknowledge and free will). The former, that we may believe well; the latter, that we may live well. (5:10)

It would be to take the argument out of context, if it were concluded that the unaided will had the power to effect righteous living.

The statements on will found in Books 12-14 can be classified under three categories: The Fall as defection of the will (Book 12:7, 8; 13:13; 14:13), Original Sin seminally transferred (Book 13:13, 14); and bondage to the corruption of the flesh as man's penal condition (Book 13:13; 14:3, 15). As should be noted, all three are mentioned in Book 13:13:

They experienced a new notion of their flesh, which had become disobedient to God ... Then began the flesh to lust against the Spirit, in which strife we are born, deriving from the first transgression a seed of death.

Evil was caused by the voluntary defection of the will (Book 12:7,8) which was due to Adam's "superbia," his craving for undue exaltation (14:13).

The rebellion of the flesh is just punishment:

For the corruption of the body, which weighs down the soul, is not the cause of sin, but the punishment of sin. (Book 14:3)

So it began and so it continues:

Thus from the bad use of free will there originated the whole train of evil which ... convoys the human race from its depraved origin, as from a corrupt root, on to the destruction of the second death, which has no end, those only being excepted who are freed by the grace of God. (Book 13:14)

While the emphasis is on the voluntary fall of the will and hence the soul (Book 14:6), there is mention of dependence on grace and the completeness of this dependence. This is stated even more explicitly in Book 14:11.

...and this (free will) being lost by its own fault, can only be restored by him who was able at first to give it.

In relation to the exegesis in Simplician, there is the same process of fall and penalty, but there is no sense of man, of his own accord once cast down, looking back to see from where he had fallen. It would appear that apart from grace, the spirit would be so corrupted that it wouldn't know it warred against the flesh. This is in conflict with Augustine's explanation that not even pagans would carry^{on} certain shameful acts in the dark. The inconsistency so far would be in this area of the sensibility of the fallen will. In Simplician, the stress is on the effective power of the will. Thus far in City of God, the stress has moved

behind the power to the cognizance of the will. This direction becomes even stronger in the remaining books.

In Book 15:6, Augustine speaks of the difficulties and travail which the citizens of the City of God have in this life. These citizens are to aid one another as cited in Scripture. The Holy Spirit helps internally in the enterprize. Still there must be the grace of God aiding the soul in the subjugation of the lusts of the body. If this happens then the soul is converted and God possesses it now, and after death in "peace everlasting." The exhortative beginning of Book 15:6 maintains the importance of the righteous efforts of the will; efforts however, which are impossible without the grace spoken of in the latter portion of the section and paraphrased above. The import of this section is elaborated from another angle in Book 21:20-27 where Augustine argues laboriously to find a middle ground between faith and works. It is perfectly clear to Augustine that mere membership in the Catholic church will not suffice when accompanied by a sinful and heretical life. Also mere good deeds will not suffice.

And they who make themselves
members of a harlot, are not
members of Christ unless they
have penitently abandoned that
evil, and have returned to this
good to be reconciled to it. (21:25)

In what follows in Book 21, the material is especially important in studying Augustine's thought in relation to the Greek Fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa regarding the purging of the soul to take place following death. What is significant in Augustine's treatment is that the profligates of this life will arrive into the eternal habitations. The stress on the purgings is that of punishment, not stripping away the soul's baggage of sinfulness. The punishment also can be in this life as described in Bk. 21:16:

...and so by a penitence more bitter and a struggle more violent than it otherwise would have been, they subdue the soul to God, and thus give it lawful authority over the flesh, and become victors.

Penitence, however, is not possible without grace, although Augustine is ambivalent in these passages as to whether the will can supplicate grace before its advent.

In Book 22:22 Augustine sets forth the predicament of man by way of leading into his description of man's final and blessed state. In the preceding section he has explained that in contrast to the future life in a spiritual body, the man under grace in this life is still confronted with his penal condition, the

law of his members warring against the law of his mind. Restoration of the body will only be in the resurrection. In Book 22:22, the sin of Adam is born into every man. Yet God has not deserted man in his fallen condition,

The human race is restrained by law and instruction which keep guard against the ignorance that besets us, and oppose the assaults of vice, but are themselves full of labor and sorrow.

Nonetheless, human life is difficult on account of the evil done by the wicked and by innumerable natural calamities. All this is permitted, not caused, by God so that men will desire the "felicity to come." Religion in this life has no necessary advantages, lest men seek it for temporal advantages. So man is condemned to misery, the toils of which are not escaped through grace. Grace rather, enables men to endure, to persevere. What the grace of Christ saves men from especially is the second death.

In the closing section of City of God, Augustine depicts the consummation as creation having come full circle from the Fall. Man's free will will be perfected in such a way that it can never choose the evil, just as Adam in choosing the evil, was subsequently unable to choose the good. This conclusion of City of God

makes it eminently clear that the terms in which Augustine thought about man's predicament remains the same. He believes he is saying what Paul said. There is the fallen will with the penal condition of man's members warring against him; against them is restoration by grace alone. More emphasis, however, has been given to Grace, and little is left to the fallen will. Augustine has solidified his position in face of the Pelagians: there is nothing good whatsoever without grace. The will is free, but has lost all sight of the good. Augustine's Treatise On Grace and Free Will, one of his latest works, shows exactly how far Augustine finally went in elevating Grace above free will.

There is heavy quoting of Romans 7:6-13 in chapter twenty-two. The Pelagians argued that the law was a form of grace helping man to avoid sin. Augustine quotes Romans to show that there was no help in the law, no grace, but rather that sin, "might by the commandment become exceedingly sinful!" Augustine feels free to quote Paul. On the use of the law they are of one mind--the law is good and it convicts man. It does not aid man for only the Spirit gives life. And for this Augustine will quote Gal. 2:16; II Cor. 3:6; Romans 8:3. There is still also the basic conviction regarding the law that it makes sin more sinful and thereby

making sin more desirable for the fallen man.

For concupiscence is increased
and receives greater energies
from the prohibition of the law,
if the spirit of grace be not at
hand to help. (Ch. 8)

Indeed the will of fallen man is so weak that without continued help the will falls again and again. Grace, however, is not irresistible. Those to whom it is given, must so order their wills so as to accomplish the desire made possible through grace (cf. ch. 7,8). Man is ignorant, but his problem is not discussed in terms of education of the will, for even prayer to overcome temptation is proof of the operation of grace (ch. 9-27). Man's use of the will is dependent on grace at every step, though it would seem man's cooperation is necessary.

The spirit of grace, therefore
causes us to have faith, in
order that through faith we
may, on praying for, obtain
the ability to do what we are
commanded (ch. 29).

Man does the good by "applying thoroughly efficacious powers to the will." (ch. 32). When through God we have the will, and use it as directed, God "cooperates" (cf. ch.33). This cooperation is a necessary part of God's Grace on the will, if the will is to have the power to act arightly. By and large, however, Augustine

leaves the impression of total dependence of the will upon Grace (cf. ch. 41-43).

God works in the hearts of men to incline them after the pleasure of His own will whether to good deeds--according to his mercy, or to evil, after their own deserts (ch. 43).

On the surface, the Augustine of the Treatise On Grace and Free Will appears different from the Augustine of the Treatise On Free Will and the Letter to Simplician. Close attention, shows, however, little change in the major points. The main points remain the same. The main theological points operative in the Letter to Simplician were:⁶

- 1) The Old Testament law is good and has its place in the scheme of salvation.
- 2) Man cannot presume on his own strength but must rely on God's Grace.
- 3) Man's fallen will has two alternatives: to turn to God for the power to fulfill righteousness; to reject grace and remain in bondage to sin.

The changes in Augustine's understanding of Romans 7 modifies these points, it does not remove them. His topical use of these points in his later writings which we have analyzed would point to the following changes:

⁶ These points given above on pages 12-19.

- 1) The law makes sin sinful. It is still above all good in itself. There is no sense of guilt arising from transgression of the law inherent in man's relationship to the law apart from grace.
- 2) Man's dependence on grace is full.
- 3) What alternatives, if any, left to the will, are unclear. It was created free, of course, but once fallen it is a wan operator. It has little function beyond being the fall guy and that aspect of man upon which and through which grace operates.

Exegesis of Romans 7:7-8:1 in, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians:

These modifications of the main points are dramatically illustrated in Augustine's re-treatment of Romans 7 in Book I, chapters 14-24 of Against Two Letters of the Pelagians. The work reflects polemical concerns in face of the Pelagians who accused the apostle Paul of being "polluted by lust." Augustine uses Romans 7 to show in just what sense Paul was "carnal." The context in which he sees Paul operating is that of "grace vs. law," not the "goodness or evil of the law." With these two overarching factors in mind, the main line of the exegesis can be seen in his understanding of Romans 7:22-23 and in his conclusion of the passage, not with Romans 7:25a but with Romans 8:1

I do not see how a man under the law should say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," since that very delight in the good, by which moreover he does not consent to evil, not from fear of penalty, but from love

of righteousness (for his is meant by 'delighting'), can only be attributed to grace (Book I:22, underscoring mine).

By ending with Romans 8:1 Augustine is able to show, that while Paul contended with lusts of flesh, he did not consent to them. He thus is able to refute the Pelagian's attack on Paul. This argument follows from his exegesis of Romans 8:14, "I am carnal." For Augustine this is in the present tense and refers to Paul when he was under grace (cf. chapters 16 and 17). Because he is still under the body of death, Paul, for Augustine, states that verse 16 means to say the good he would do is incomplete due to the presence of lust, not that he consents to lust. The "now then" of verse 17 is in this connection interpreted as temporal, not as a logical connector to the preceding thought.

His exegesis of Romans 7:7-13 chapters 14-16 is far shorter than compared to what follows and is therefore difficult to compare with Simplician. The main lines of it, however, basically follow what he had worked out previously. The Law is good, though it makes sin manifest. Paul here is speaking of man before grace; sin before the coming of the knowledge of Law was latent. Indeed, suggests Augustine regarding vs. 9, Paul "may have wished his first age from infancy to be understood before the years of reason (Book I:14)."

The function of the law was to make sin sinful. He writes, following Simplician:

...So that sin being known and increased,
grace may be sought for through faith.

However, the seeking of grace, from what follows regarding "delighting in the law of God," in ch. 22 and what he was to say about Grace in his Treatise On Grace and Free Will, was dependent upon the initial operation of grace.

What then has happened in Augustine's thinking? Under the pressure of Pelagianism he did a flip flop in respect to Paul's temporal relation to what he wrote in Romans 7. The Pelagians stressed free will, and in opposition to them, Augustine stressed grace at the expense of free-will nearly to the point of excluding the adjective "free." His position could be summed up in a sentence: Fallen man will delight in his transgression while under the law; initial grace will enable him to see his error so that he will see his guilt before God's law. He will then be able to seek additional grace to act in accordance to the "spirit of the law," though while in this life he will have continued the struggle with the lusts of the flesh, lusts which will be purged from the body only in the life after this present life.

Initially Augustine had viewed man's condition theologically and psychologically. The lusts of the flesh were the just punishments for man's self-pride

against God. By correcting man's relationship to God through grace, the rebellion of the flesh would be healed. Right order would prevail. Full perfection for Augustine, however, was to be found only in the after-life. Still, much could be accomplished. In his later writings the same scheme inheres in Augustine's thinking. The lusts of the flesh will remain; much more emphasis is given to what God's "grace upon grace" will bring to pass in the life eternal (cf. Bk.22 of City of God).

Such was the result of Augustine's experience in his later years and especially in his conflict with the Pelagians. The way in which he approached Paul, however, remained basically in the same terms. It remains, then, for us in the next chapter to deal with the antecedents on which Augustine drew. It is necessary to deal with his relationship to the Pauline corpus, especially Romans 7 as can be deduced from Confessions, in light of his antecedents in order to determine just how it was Augustine asked the questions of Romans which he asked, and how he operated in light of those questions.

CHAPTER THREE

ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS

The close relationship between Augustine's understanding of Romans 7:7-25 and his own self-understanding, as reflected in his Confessions, is striking and unmistakable. In fact Augustine states in Book VIII:xxi, 27 that at the time just prior to his conversion, he was reading Paul and finding there everything he sought--Plato plus grace. In his understanding, Romans 7:22-25 precisely described his pre-conversion condition. The interlocking of Paul and Augustine at this point is complete, so much so that it is difficult to separate and analyze them. How did Romans affect Augustine's understanding and perception of his own experience? How did his experience affect his understanding of Paul's meaning? The possibility of answering these questions is dependent upon explaining in some measure the unique, though not entirely unprecedented nature of Augustine's view of himself and of Paul.

As was mentioned in chapter one, the Greek Fathers from the time of Origen had understood Romans 7:7-25 as having been autobiographical, descriptive of Paul's pre-conversion condition. In Origen's commentary, such an interpretation flows naturally out of Origen's view of the Mosaic Law. It functioned as a

restrainer upon fleshly, unredeemed man and as an inner renovator and illuminator of man.¹ The latter emphasis especially would lend itself to a biographical interpretation. This aspect of Augustine's interpretation of Romans is, then, not without precedent. By way of contrast, however, the depth of introspection to be found in Augustine is unique. In no writer, Christian or pagan, Greek or Latin prior to Augustine is there such an agonizing interior self-analysis of thought, emotion and behavior as in Augustine. Next to him, Greek self-analysis appears abstract with its emphasis upon reason and illumination, and with its inclination toward exteriorizing and objectifying sin and evil. How then can the phenomenon of the man St. Augustine be accounted for and understood?

It is the contention of this chapter that a close reading of Confessions, having in mind Augustine's North African heritage and his neo-Platonism prior to his conversion, will provide the answer to the above question. More precisely, Augustine's rigoristic North African heritage caused him to take his own sins, his own moral failures very seriously. Then, by embracing

¹ Jean Scherrer, Le Commentaire D'Origene sur Romans III:5-V:7 (Imprimere De Institut Francais D'Archelogie Orientale: Cairo, 1957), pp.144-153.

neo-Platonism, Augustine immersed himself in a school of thought which focused almost entirely on the ascent and the course of salvation of the individual soul. The convergence of these two traditions in Augustine gave him the tools and impetus to make a searching analysis of his failure to measure up to the demands of North African Christianity.²

In order to gain perspective for an analysis of Confessions, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of Augustine's Latin heritage and the thought milieu of neo-Platonism. Considerable work has been done relating and distinguishing the thought of Augustine and Plotinus. It is not necessary for the purposes

²Part of the background is certainly C.N. Cockrane's thesis that the Trinitarian settlement in 381 A.D. freed Augustine from cosmology and made it philosophically possible for him to work anthropologically. This, however, is a thesis in itself and does not substantially add or detract from the contention of this paper. C.N. Cockrane, Christianity and Classical Culture (Oxford University Press: New York, 1944), pp. 383-390. Paul Henry argues a similar point, but from a different position. He notes that in Greek thought there was no developed idea of man as person, as an individual. To them man was an idea, a part in the realm of the cosmos in which Greek thought moved. Augustine moves into anthropology. He did this due to the pressure and challenge of the Christian paradoxical dogma of the consubstantiality of the Three Persons, a dogma which had been defined but not explained in the Trinitarian councils of the fourth century. Paul Henry, S.J., St. Augustine on Personality (MacMillan: New York, 1960), pp.11,12.

of this thesis to add to what has already been done; a brief sketch of the main points of Plotinus's thought will afford sufficient background. Less work has been done on Latin North Africa. The tradition is not to be grasped in any single personage of the Patristics period as is the case with Plotinus and neo-Platonism. A brief look at Cicero who typifies best the Latin outlook in general, and then Tertullian and Cyprian, who are expressive of North African Christianity, will provide a sketch of Augustine's Latin background.

Latin Heritage:

Every student of the classical world is struck by the pragmatic and dutiful efforts of the Romans. Somewhere in the compass of the adjectives duty, honor, skill and glory lies the Roman genius. It is a genius that gives Augustine pause for admiration in his City of God (V:16-21). Roman philosophical thought in general was characterized by a marked degree of eclecticism. By and large the Latin Middle-Platonists remained true to the Platonic tradition in general, but with large borrowings from Stoicism and with varying degrees of borrowings from neo-Pythagoreanism and Aristotelianism.³

³A.H. Armstrong, An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy (Newman Press: Westminster, Maryland, 1959), p.154.

As might be suspected, Roman borrowings from Greek thought tended toward the practical. This was especially true of Roman Stoics who made far more use of Stoic ethics than they ever did of Stoic cosmology. With respect to Deity, God generally was viewed as the remote head of the hierarchy of reality.⁴ Their concern was with a workable structure of reality. Cicero's place in Latin philosophical thought is of twofold importance. Cicero was a transmitter of Greek thought; he borrowed whole cloth without making original contributions. Insofar as he was a transmitter, he was also Augustine's introduction to Greek thought (cf. Confessions III, iii: 7 and 8).

In Cicero's Laws, one of his more original dialogues, he is concerned basically to refine Plato's Politics. By comparison, however, it is crude, but it does give a picture of Cicero's thought and a significant representation of the Latin mentality in general. For the basis of the structure of the political order, Cicero maintains that law and justice are built into nature. "Law," he says, "is not a product of human thought, nor is it any enactment of peoples, but something eternal which rules the whole universe by its wisdom in command and prohibition."⁵ Law is the highest

⁴Ibid., p.155.

⁵Cicero, Laws, II:iv.

reason implanted by nature; justice is inherent in nature and it is upon this base that any just and workable state has to be built. This is to say that law is the "primal and ultimate mind of God," the implication being that the true and just state is the reflection of the divine more so than the soul of the individual.

Laws is transparent with Roman austerity. On the negative side, pleasure is the mother of all evils. On the positive side, there is the continual acclamation of the Roman aristocrat's sacrifice of himself for the sake of fulfilling his duty to the state. Religion must be maintained for the sake of stability and the masses are to be taught that the gods are rulers and benefactors who observe the character and piety of every man.⁶ The point at which Cicero himself becomes the most pious and the least philosophical is when he speaks of the family cults. These above all else are to be observed; they are the most sacred. "The sacred rites of families shall remain forever."⁷ The principle of "do ut des" ("give that you may receive") is operative here. Its significance in Latin tradition cannot be underestimated as it is antecedent to the rigorism of

⁶Ibid., II:vii.

⁷Ibid., II:viii, ix.

Latin Christianity and was operative in Constantine's materialistic view of Christianity in relation to the empire. It was a view that Augustine combats in IV:33 of his City of God.⁸

The first Christian theologian to write in Latin was Tertullian. In many respects he sets the stage on which Augustine appears. He wrote of the Christian Rule of Faith as an inheritance which demanded absolute commitment and permitted no backslidings. Prior to his conversion to Christianity he was imbued with Latin Stoicism with its emphasis upon ethics and, at that time, a materialistic doctrine of the divine. The divine was, in his view, a very fine, fiery substance. Both the rigorism and the materialistic conception of the divine are operative factors in Augustine's struggle in Confessions. But, even more, beyond this obvious connection of Tertullian and Confessions, is the fact that the whole of Tertullian's Christian thought is shaped by a "Christianized Platonism" received by a Latin mentality.

The nature of Tertullian's thought in this respect has been carefully set forth in R.A. Norris, Jr.'s chapter, "Tertullian--A Latin Perspective" in his book,

⁸Theodor E. Mommsen, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ed. by E.F. Rice, Jr. (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York, 1959), pp.280-281.

God and World in Early Christian Theology.⁹ It would be presumptuous of this thesis to do more than set forth those of Dr. Norris's points which are of concern here. Dr. Norris points out Tertullian's main concern in his theology differs from Greek theology: Greek concern is with the search for the vision of a stable Reality. Tertullian's concern is in the apprehension of God's Will for the course of men's individual and collective lives.¹⁰ As Dr. Norris states it, " ... the name 'God' belongs properly to that supreme and active Will in whose counsels and decrees man's destiny is contained; and that man's calling is to give himself in obedience to this Will as it makes itself known."¹¹ In further explaining the Latinity of Tertullian's view, Dr. Norris notes how, in Tertullian's Apology, he repeatedly supports the validity of scripture by pointing to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in contemporary history. The significance of this is that it represents Tertullian's general focus upon the course of events of his age.¹²

⁹ R.A. Norris, Jr., God and World in Early Christian Theology. (Seabury Press: New York, 1965), pp. 99-126.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 117-119.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 119.

¹² Ibid., pp. 121, 123.

The place of Christian life in this world, as Dr. Norris puts it, "is necessarily a rigorous struggle: an act of ever-renewed and costly obedience to God in the midst of an age in which God's sovereignty is actively denied and opposed."¹³

The parallels of Tertullian with Cicero in the above points are apparent. In both, there is a major concern with social structure and individual behavior within the context of that structure as it is given by the Divine. In Cyprian there is evidence of the same basic concerns. Cyprian is most famous for his writing and pastoral efforts on behalf of church unity. In this connection his major writing is The Unity of the Catholic Church. There is strong emphasis upon the structure of the church and the fact that apart from it there was no salvation. "There is one head, one origin, one mother prolific with off-spring; of her we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are quickened."¹⁴ For Cyprian a schismatic was in far worse condition than a lapsed Christian, for a schismatic had consciously moved outside the pale of the church, beyond the possibility of salvation.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p.125.

¹⁴Cyprian, The Unity of the Catholic Church, 5.

¹⁵Gerald Bonner, St. Augustine of Hippo (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1963), p.282.

North African Christian rigorism is fully evident in his Treatise on the Lapsed, in which he offers grim portrayals of the fate of lapsed Christians who attempted to receive the sacraments without being reconciled to the church.¹⁶ Cyprian's Epistle to Donatus is also worth examining for in it he gives a brief account of his conversion. As such it is a superficial predecessor of Augustine's Confessions. It is very brief, and as B.B. Warfield points out, it is very rhetorical and lacks any real reflection of personal struggle.¹⁷ The account deals primarily with how corruption by material nature and corruption acquired by long accustomed indulgence is divested through baptism. He writes very graphically of a total change noting that, "All our power is of God."¹⁸

The above material on Augustine's Latin inheritance reflects the kind of Christianity and thought which Augustine was brought up on by his mother; it reflects the Christian aspect of his environment in general. It is an inheritance that Augustine never

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 279.

¹⁷ B.B. Warfield, Studies in Tertullian and Augustine (Oxford University Press: New York, 1930), pp. 245-246.

¹⁸ Cyprian, Epistle to Donatus, 4.

rejected as a Christian, one however which he moved beyond. It is necessary now to outline the neo-Platonic thought which lent him with certain basic conceptions that enabled Christianity to be intellectually palatable to him.

Neo-Platonism:

In Book VII of Confessions Augustine describes the delight with which he came upon the Latin translation of Plotinus' Enneads by Marius Victorinus. In chapter xvii he describes his experience of neo-Platonic ecstasy in which he moved upward from bodily senses to the soul, to reason, and so from the changeable to the unchangeable. There is no question but that neo-Platonism was a major stepping stone for Augustine in his conversion. What then are the major points in Plotinus? A.H. Armstrong in An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy, provides us with perhaps the best concise description of the thought of Plotinus.¹⁹

The philosophy of Plotinus presents us with a great ordered hierarchical structure of spiritual reality, a cosmos, which though it is static and eternal is no mechanical pattern, but living and organic. In this cosmos

¹⁹Armstrong, Ancient Philosophy, pp.175-196.

there are two movements ... The first, the cosmic movement, is one away from unity towards an ever-increasing multiplicity; the second, the movement of the spiritual life, goes from multiplicity back to the perfect and originating unity and the highest possible degree of unification.²⁰

With this great over-arching structure Plotinus deals in a sophisticated, often complicated fashion with the issues which confront the human soul. It deals with the status of evil and suffering in relation to the human condition. Evil is in the movement away from unity and the Divine Mind and so lies in the direction of non-being. Yet the whole structure is good, as all being is derived from its apex, the transcendent First Principle. Even so, the experience of the embodied soul is unpleasant and necessarily involves suffering. The root sin of the soul, however, is its self-isolation, its devoting itself to its own particular embodiment rather than its higher destiny. It is material existence of the lowest rank, and is, therefore, unpleasant for the spiritual soul.²¹

Tremendous attention is given to the spiritual soul, for it is the only reality which inhabits both the world of spirit and the world of matter. To a

²⁰Ibid., pp.178-179

²¹Ibid., pp.191-192.

great extent the entire system, based on this unique aspect of the soul, is a projection of the stages of human consciousness to the cosmic level. Therefore, the introspective activity of the individual soul becomes its foremost activity, for it is by contemplation and a process of abstraction that the soul makes its pilgrimage toward the Divine unity.

Confessions:

St. Augustine's Confessions has long been a widely read, studied, and meditated volume. It has been a spiritually uplifting writing that has inspired innumerable Christians in the Western tradition. But it has proved an equally great frustration to scholars who would use it to determine Augustine's life and the course of his development. As a source for such determinings, is it fairly adequate, or not adequate at all? Debate over this question would be a thesis in and of itself. The grounds for the debate are perfectly clear: Augustine wrote the Confessions ~~some~~ twelve years after his conversion at a time when his thought had basically matured. What is presented in Confessions is hindsight and meditation on his own life to the praise of God. In Book X,iv:6 he states that in the writing of Confessions he was confessing not so much what he was

before, but who he was at the time he wrote the work. From what he explains about memory in the rest of the Book X, it is evident why Augustine wrote Confessions the way he did.

Great is the power of the
memory. It is a true marvel,
O my God, a profound and in-
finite multiplicity! And this
is the mind, and this I myself
am. (X:xii,26)

The great storehouse of the mind, the memory, is the content of man. It is the place into which God comes. To praise God then, to confess him, is to describe the contents of one's memory; it is to describe those places where God entered into the memory.

Because of the fact that Confessions was written entirely in hindsight, and with no desire merely to recount a series of events, but rather to recount God, it is impossible to refine the work into an objective account of the various influences on his life's course. It is possible however, to work backward from the time of his conversion. Such an approach will not yield full knowledge of the man Augustine, but it will give focus which converged upon him at the time of his conversion, and will describe something of the nature of the convergence.

Augustine's description of his conversion comes at the end of Book VIII where, having described great inner turmoil, he hears a command to read the Bible. He does so and his eye rests upon Romans 13:13. "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." What had happened? In the chapters immediately preceding, Augustine struggles to describe what is in fact a central point in his exegesis of Romans 7:7-25 in the Simplician: One will but two conflicting wills. Leaving aside theological refinements for a moment, Augustine was saying that although he willed the good, willed to act purely, the accustomed sin held sway. By accepting that this conflict was due to his will and not to anything exterior, the words of Romans 13:13 were able to ring true. He was reduced to a simple choice: either he was to accept Christ, or he was to continue in his accustomed life of sin and internal conflict. In other words, the resolution of his inner conflict was predicted upon the resolution of the problem of his sinning when he willed to the contrary. How he did this is described in chapter v of Book VIII. In it Augustine describes his spiritual will by which he no longer

sought to fulfill the desires of his old carnal will, noting that it is no "I" of Romans 7:20, but sin in him "...because here I was an unwilling sufferer than a willing actor." Habit held sway, yet it had been through him that it had become strong. The conflict, as he sees it, stems back to Adam freely choosing to rebel against God, for which he, and mankind with him, was justly punished.

For out of the perverse will came
lust, and the service of lust ended
in habit, and habit not resisted
became necessity.

The argument for the one will and soul against Manichaeism in chapter X may well reflect a later degree of theological sophistication, but it does point to what Augustine felt necessary to move beyond. In his basic resolution, two major influences can be seen. First, there is the neo-Platonic concept of evil as being a deficient cause and sin being the result of a perverse will. Secondly, there is the Latin legal inheritance which enabled Augustine to articulate that the present human condition was justly penal. It may well be that the Latin focus upon man as a member of family and state, as opposed to primary focus upon the individual himself, enabled Augustine to view Adam's Fall as an almost totally debilitating force whereby

the individual inheritor is justly condemned. Greek patristics shied away from such a harsh view. Adam's Fall was more descriptive of the human condition than it was a causative factor in history, bringing on the damnation of mankind. The Fall rather marked man's limited nature; the soul was still capable of illumination to an extent not to be found at all in the later writings of Augustine, and only partially in the earlier ones.²²

The net effect of the arguments in chapters v-xi of Book VIII is the resolution of the problem of evil. In point of fact, Augustine has achieved a "correct" understanding of sin and evil by the end of Book VII, he needs only the final push which he obtains from the conversion stories of Marius Victorinus and the two government agents. He struggles with the fact that through his own perversity, sin has held him in sway, and goes to the garden where he experiences his conversion.

²² R.M. Cooper, "St. Augustine's Doctrine of Evil," Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 16, 1963, pp.256-276. Cooper, in analyzing all of Augustine's writings, points out that Augustine makes a distinction between limitation and privation. To be limited in Augustine is natural and is a result of man being created ex nihilo and therefore necessarily dependent upon the sustenance of God. Privation is, in Augustine, of Original Sin which describes man's penal condition.

Running throughout Book VII, Augustine struggles with two inter-related problems: the nature of God and the problem of evil. In chapter i, he speaks of difficulty in picturing God, though he no longer thought of him in materialistic terms analogous to the human body. He knew God was spiritual, but was unable to conceive of him apart from substance. In chapters iii-vii he ponders the problem of evil. He recognized that the evil he did was the result of his own willing, but struggled to understand why he did what he was unwilling, and how evil could exist contrary to the will of God, God by definition and according to scripture being truth and goodness. In chapter viii he tells of reading translations of "certain books of the Platonists," these probably being the Enneads of Plotinus.²³ In what follows Augustine identifies the neo-Platonic Transcendent Unity with God and the Divine Mind (nous) with the Word. The degree of ambivalence here toward neo-Platonism, reflected in the askant fashion in which he refers to their writings without naming them, may largely reside in Augustine's hindsight.

²³ A.C. Outler, "Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion," Library of Christian Classics, vol. VII (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, n.d.), p.144n.

As it is, he begrudges it partial truth which enabled him to see the whole truth as contained in the Fourth Gospel. Even the clear-cut parallelism between Nous and Logos is probably attributable to hindsight. That this is the case is suggested by Augustine's statement that he was unable to maintain the clear gaze of his neo-Platonic ecstasy reported in chapter xvii. He says, in effect, in chapters xviii and xix, that this was because he was lacking in Christology.

This insight opens up more nearly what in fact transpired at this crucial time in Augustine's development. He had moved beyond a materialistic conception of God and knew that he could not adequately explain sin and evil by exteriorizing them. In neo-Platonism Augustine found solutions to the problems with which he was struggling. In chapter 12 there is an argument of evil being the privation of good and hence as having no substance. In chapter xiii there is a further description of evil as disharmony with the statement that the things above are better than things below, but that all of creation together was better than the higher things in and of themselves. This view of a harmonious order and evil as non-substantial makes possible a vision of God as spiritual and infinite as reported in chapter xiv. The extent to which Augustine

became rhapsodic over creation and the spiritual ordering of it can be seen in his extended metaphors of musical harmonies in his Treatise on Music, a writing begun before his conversion and completed after it. His neo-Platonic ecstasy in chapter xvii is preceded by a climactic statement on evil in chapter xvi.

And I asked what wickedness was,
and I found that it was no substance,
but a perversion of the will bent aside from thee, O God,
the supreme substance, toward these lower things casting away
its inmost treasure and becoming bloated with external good.

This statement is entirely neo-Platonic.²⁴ Following the ecstasy Augustine states that he did not have the strength to maintain the vision until he came to embrace Jesus Christ as lowly savior, i.e., became converted to him.

It is important to stop here and ask why Augustine could not rest in neo-Platonism. The obvious answer lies in the fact of his mother's influence and his being raised in North African Christianity. This answer does involve psychologizing, but has some basis in the fact that the name of Christ was always revered by him.

²⁴Cf., Plotinus, Enneads, V, i:1. "The evil which overtakes us has its source in self-will, in the entry into the sphere of process and in the primal assertion of the desire for self-ownership."

Prior to his coming upon the writings of Plotinus, he indicates that the faith of Christ was, " ... stuck fast in my heart (VII, v.7)." This explanation, however, is subject to a difficult weighing of Augustine's gratitude for his mother in hindsight, against the emphasis given to what must have been only one of several subconscious forces in the man Augustine. Further analysis of the problem of evil for Augustine will suggest why, cognitively, he could not remain with neo-Platonism.

Augustine, as discussed above, wrestles with evil throughout Book VII and again throughout much of Book VIII. The cosmic movement in neo-Platonism answered many questions, but it had a major difference with Catholic doctrine as Augustine was learning it, the doctrine of creation. Creation was good in and of itself; this included physical creation. In Plotinus, embodied existence was unpleasant because it was at the furthest remove from the Transcendent Unity. The stress was such that physical creation bordered on non-being itself and hence was virtually evil in itself. Augustine might appreciate the cosmic grandeur of the system, but he was an individual very much aware of being caught up in his old ways. Neo-Platonism only provided a philosophical way out of corporeality. The grounds for saying this are predicated on two related assumptions. First,

Augustine viewed his own sins in an intensely personal fashion because of his rigoristic upbringing. He did this to such a degree that a method of abstraction from sin would not work. Secondly, Augustine reflects a genuine sense of guilt which is not merely manufactured in his memory when he refers to the fact, as in Book II, chapter ii, that "unlawful pleasures" indulged in during his adolescence brought with them a conscience of "bitter discontent." Augustine describes his dilemma in Book VII, xx, 26:

By having thus read the books of the Platonists, and having been taught by them to search for the incorporeal Truth, I saw how invisible things are understood through things that are made. And, even when I was thrown back, I still sensed what it was dullness of my soul would not allow me to contemplate. I was assured thou wast, and wast infinite ... Of all this I was convinced, yet I was too weak to enjoy thee.

In chapter xxi Augustine moves forward to describing the epiphanal way in which he now read Scripture, especially the writings of Paul. "So I began and I found that whatever truth I had read (in the Platonists) was here combined with the exaltation of Thy Grace."

Augustine goes on to quote from Romans 7:22-25a paraphrasing only verse 25a: " ... except thy Grace through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is beefed up by a

statement of the doctrine of the creation of the Word which was to be the Chalcedon formula.

What Augustine is revealing, is that neo-Platonism enabled him to appreciate Paul, and that through Paul he was able to apply neo-Platonic categories to scripture. This provided him the entrance into Christian doctrine which he needed. When Paul spoke of a law in his members at war with the law of his mind, he was speaking of a deficient cause versus an efficient one. Without such an interpretation Paul would be a crass dualist, or Augustine would have to explain away the law he was opposing, e.g., Jewish ritual law. So Augustine had a key for understanding Paul and Paul had the answer to Augustine's own wretchedness, Christ.

It would be interesting, but not essential to this paper, to pursue further the course of Augustine's thought back to his description of his infancy, based on what he, as a mature Christian, had observed in infants. Such a pursuit would reveal Augustine's quest for perfection seen in his studies and his struggle with evil evidenced by his having been a Manichaean. Such a study would perhaps reveal something of the crudity of Christianity in a provincial place such as Tagaste; it would reveal also something of the depth of Augustine's insight

into human motivation as revealed in the "pear tree incident" of chapters iv-vi of Book II.²⁵ What has been done, however, has been to examine the influence of Paul upon Augustine at the time of his conversion. It is necessary to carry this forward into his subsequent work on Romans 7:7-25 by bringing together the material discussed in the first three chapters of this paper.

²⁵ Augustine's analysis of this boyhood incident is fuller and more sensitive case analysis than what I have seen even in fairly recent works.

CHAPTER FOUR

AUGUSTINE IN RELATION TO ROMANS 7:7-25

What, in the final analysis, is Augustine's relationship to Paul's message in Romans 7:7-25? In order to deal with this question, it has been necessary to analyze and deal with certain prior questions. It was necessary to ascertain what in fact is to be found in Romans 7:7-25; it was necessary to locate Augustine's understanding of the passage, his use of it in light of his understanding, and the effect of his use of it upon his understanding. It was necessary, through his Confessions to analyze what problems and influences lay behind his understanding. The preceding chapters of this thesis are fairly independent. In order to make full use of them, I shall draw out the implications of each to the end of dealing with the question raised at the beginning of this chapter.

In chapter one, the possibility of wider interpretations of the passage were brought forward as opposed to traditional interpretations which view it as auto-biographical and descriptive of Paul's anthropology of sin. In light of recent studies on Paul, it should be asked, how far astray did Augustine's neo-Platonic framework lead him? Augustine saw the passage

as describing sin as defection of the will, and the Law making the defection manifest. This is a negative statement of the classical belief that the law is a reflection of the divine order God willed at creation. Barth states that Romans 7 is an elucidation of the fact that the Gospel liberates man from the law of sin and death. This elucidation includes a description of how the Law incites man to sin and how it condemns man to death. It describes the plight of the man who would rid himself of his sin by himself. Brunner states that Paul is describing the Godless man and something of the plight of the man in Christ, who, though free, is still bound in the flesh. Stendahl sees it a defense of the goodness of the Law in which the "I" of vss. 13-25 is acquitted and the Law of sin and the flesh is condemned. Longenecker sees its main thrust as a description of man's own inability apart from God. If the autobiographical aspect of Augustine's interpretation is laid aside, there is some basic agreement with the non-traditional modern interpretations. All of these agree that the passage is concerned with the plight of man apart, in some measure, from grace. (In the later Augustine this would only be the "grace upon grace" received in the life after death.) The primary difference, however, lies with the modern

interpreters seeing the anthropology of the passage as subordinate to the historical awareness of Paul, and Augustine seeing it as dealing with man more as a timeless phenomenon. The fact that Augustine did not see a historical factor cannot be attributed to a lack of concern for the movement of history; his City of God demonstrates a remarkable degree of historical sensitivity that is virtually unrivaled until the eighteenth century. Even so, Augustine saw the passage only in anthropological terms. The point to be made here, however, is that what Augustine does in fact expound is, exegetically speaking, present in the passage, as shown by the comparison with modern exegesis.

The analysis which was done in chapter two revealed an amazing degree of inner consistency between Augustine's exegesis and his use of Romans 7:7-25. In none of the quotations from the passage in Romans, was there an instance of Augustine using any part of it in a way to suggest a meaning different from his exegetical understanding. This is rather remarkable given the extent and varied nature of Augustine's writings. Throughout all his writings Augustine consistently maintains God's goodness, the goodness of his creation, the goodness of the Law, and that the Fall, man's sin, and evil are the result of deficient causes. Augustine's

change of position from a pre-conversion to a post-conversion interpretation of the passage is commensurate with his increasingly minimizing the power of will and maximizing its dependence upon grace. The change, however, did not involve any change in framework or approach. As R.M. Cooper states, "It should be made clear ... that this emphasis upon the gratia Dei only shifts the question of natural order and predestination to another level."¹ The shift Cooper refers to is that of raising the problem of will from a primary focus upon the anthropological level to the metaphysical level of the will of God. The fact that Augustine made the above shift in his thought is crucial in answering the opening question of this chapter, and so will be discussed further on in this chapter.

Augustine's central problem in Confessions was the problem of evil which, by Book VI has become also the problem of will. Alongside was also the difficulty of visualizing the nature of God, but this fairly readily resolved itself in a neo-Platonic framework. As was set forth in chapter three of this thesis, the uniqueness of Augustine's view of himself and of wider aspects of reality was due to the convergence of Latin Christianity

¹R.M. Cooper, St. Augustine, p. 271.

with neo-Platonic philosophy. It is likely that part of the reason why Augustine is so determinative in the history of Western thought and civilization is because the convergence that took place in him had and would continue to take place for some time in the Western World. Neo-Platonism is discernible in Western literature down through the sixteenth century, from the writings of Chretien de Troyes to Count Castiglione. Along with the convergence of two world views in Augustine, there is his wide reading of Scripture, particularly Paul. As was pointed out, Paul made sense in a neo-Platonic framework, especially when speaking of two forces in man, yet still unitively conceived. So Paul was the pivotal point that enabled Augustine to fully accept the Christian faith. But was Paul anything more than pivotal? This brings us then, to the final question.

St. Augustine, in the years immediately following his baptism felt that his previous enslavement to sin had been removed by the grace given by God. It is as though at the moment of baptism, the soul is restored to its pristine condition such as enjoyed by Adam before the Fall. In the flush of this awareness, he saw it as possible to live in the presence of God by the power of the restored will. Augustine felt free to be a neo-Platonist by the cleansing grace received at baptism.

But this is to overstate the case. Perfect and abiding enjoyment of God could come only in the after-life. In addition, Augustine was aware that a restored will could fall just as Adam fell. Human nature could be restored, but in this life, human potential remains the same.

Cooper explains Augustine's struggle with this:

The human mind knows the perfect order because of its union with truth, but, as we have noted, it never knows this truth except in ambiguity--within the ambiguity' demanded by the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. We asserted that the mind (and will) of man has a certain knowledge of this nothingness from whence it came, which constitutes the ambiguity. This difficulty led Augustine to develop his theological doctrines of grace and predestination.²

Human uncertainty and perversity left Augustine on shifting grounds when he rested the problem of evil and restoration on his understanding of man's will. In the face of this he moved toward grace, i.e., God's will, in order to solve the dilemma. This was a natural move predicated primarily on his doctrine of creation in which all of creation was dependent, at all points and all times, upon the sustaining will of God; apart from the will of God there was nothingness. Therefore, man remains at all points in his life equally dependent upon God. The man apart from Grace is nearer nothingness

²Ibid., p.275.

than the truth. Hence in the later Augustine the fact that Paul could delight in God's Law at all could only mean that he was under grace, and, hence, in what he was saying in Romans 7:7-25, he was referring to his post-conversion experience.

This line of reasoning suggests that Augustine's change of interpretation of Paul comes not from pagan philosophy, not from scripture as such, and not from his Latin heritage, but from a reasoning out of the implications of his theology. To be sure, Augustine's conflict with the Pelagians pushed him into working out the implications of his understanding of evil, but there is no indication that Augustine felt he went further than he wanted to because of the Pelagians. The analysis of Augustine's modified exegesis of Romans 7:7-8:1 (in his Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelagians) indicated that the major points which were re-interpreted were done so primarily on theological grounds.

If the examination of Augustine's relationship to Romans 7:7-25 were to rest here, the temptation would be to say that scripture was merely a ploy to the process of Augustine's reasoning. This, however, would be misleading. Augustine was informed by scripture and by the interpretations of scripture which he received. This can be seen by returning to

the baseline of Augustine's understanding of man before God. From scripture and tradition Augustine received two points about creation, that it was from nothing and that it was good. The fact that God became incarnate and the fact that God was concerned to maintain the goodness of creation, was scriptural and informed his understanding of creation. Because of these points Augustine was not merely a neo-Platonist. In Latin Christianity there was a significant emphasis upon Law. Because of the Pauline emphasis upon freedom under grace, there was always present in Augustine a sense of man's will being operative, even if the only positive thrust of the will was dependent upon its acting cooperatively with the will of God. Indeed, reason itself, which informs the will, was maintained though clearly subordinate to the gift of faith.³ Finally, while the sense of man's dependence upon grace was built into Augustine prior to his study of Paul, it was in the reading of Paul that the point was articulately established in Augustine's faith.

Thus, while precise interpretation and refinement of interpretation were subject to Augustine's frame of reference and the development of his theological thought, there is a very real sense in which Romans 7:7-25 made its

³Cockrane, Christianity and Classical Culture, p.400

own impression upon Augustine. Such is the answer of this thesis to the question, "What is Augustine's relationship to Paul's message in Roman's 7:7-25."

EPILOGUE

Hermeneutics at its most basic level deals with the two questions, "What did it mean?" and "What does it mean now?", and the process by which one moves from the former to the latter. At its most profound level it deals with the question, "Can it mean anything at all?" The first two questions appear to call primarily for an acceptable technique of exegesis and then a translation of it into modern terms. The third question, however, carries hermeneutic beyond the level of technique to be studied in Pastoral Theology. It does in fact carry over into the theological enterprise. James M. Robinson states this in his essay, "Hermeneutic since Barth."

...Ebeling has achieved a hermeneutic that has embraced the doctrine of the word of God and become the focus to a total theological position. The new hermeneutic is a new theology, just as were dialectic theology and Ritschlianism before it. Indeed, it is Ebeling's conviction that theology itself is hermeneutic, for it consists in translating what the Bible has to say into the word for today.¹

If hermeneutic is understood in this way, then such

¹James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," The New Hermeneutics, ed. by Robinson and Cobb (Harper and Row: New York, 1964), p.67.

studies as this thesis are essential to its format. Negatively, the implication of this thesis upon hermeneutic is that the Word of God is not self-authenticating. The fact that Augustine was receptive to Paul's words in Romans 7:7-25, was because Paul spoke to the problem of evil as it was experienced by Augustine. Positively, the Word of God enabled Augustine to understand the operation of God by its impingement upon his situation and world view; it neither provides him with his world view nor his situation.

To have said this is perhaps to have said the obvious, but then the obvious has not always been clear, and it always stands in need of refinement. By studying the church's theologians with the question of hermeneutic in view, the refinement necessary to on-going discussion will be facilitated.

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